

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1779

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8695

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN PROTESTS

REF: SEOUL 8570

1. FOLLOWING WEEK OF CONTINUING PROTEST CHRISTIANS REMAINED RELATIVELY QUIET CHRISTMAS DAY. ONLY SIGNIFICANT DEMONSTRATION OCCURRED AT MYUNG DONG CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL WITH YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS (JOC) AND STUDENTS JOINING FORCES FOLLOWING MASS. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION GROUP LEADERS SEE THIS AS FIRST SIGNIFICANT JOINT WORKER-STUDENT DEMONSTRATION.

2. THE DEMONSTRATION REPORTEDLY STARTED WITH THIRTY TO FORTY JOC MEMBERS BEARING SLOGANS MARCHING INTO STREET. AS POLICE TRIED TO INTERFERE SOME 150 TO 200 STUDENTS JOINED MARCHERS. POLICE ARRESTED EIGHT, INCLUDING JOC CHAIRMAN YI CHONG BOK.

3. ELSEWHERE IN SEOUL OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS LIMITED THEMSELVES TO DISTRIBUTING STATEMENTS OF GROUP OF YOUNG PASTORS WHO HAD MET ON DECEMBER 16 AT CHRISTIAN ACADEMY HOUSE AND FASTED FOR THREE DAYS IN SUPPORT OF RESTORATION OF OLD CONSTITUTION AND CIVIL RIGHTS.

4. FOR FIRST TIME PRO-ROK G CHRISTIAN GROUPS MOUNTED COUNTER-DEM-
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ONSTRATION. ORGANIZED BY CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR SHRIST, SEVEN THOUS-

AND MARCHERS PARADED DURING CHRISTMAS WEEKEND AROUND MYUNG DONG CATHEDRAL AND OTHER NEARBY CHURCHES TO DEMONSTRATE SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT.

5. TWO METHODIST MINISTERS COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT CHURCH REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S DECEMBER 26 SPEECH SETTING LIMITS TO ROKG TOLERANCE OF DISSENT WAS CONSIDERED DISAPPOINTING. THEY SAID IT BORE OUT CHRISTIAN SUSPICIONS THAT ROKG CONCILIATION GESTURES NOT SINCERE. HOWEVER, CHRISTIAN LEADERS BLAME PRESIDENT PARK RATHER THAN PRIMIN FOR HARD LINE.

6. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES GENERAL SECRETARY KIM KWAN SUK TOLD EMBOFF ON DECEMBER 24 THAT HE WOULD TRY TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE WITH PRIMIN DESPITE DISAPPOINTING FIRST MEETING AND WOULD SEEK TO INCLUDE OTHER PASTORS WHO FAILED TO ATTEND FIRST MEETING. REPORT-EDLY METHODIST MAINSTREAM REMAINS RELUCTANT TO JOIN IN NCC PROTEST MOVEMENT. (SEE REFTEL).

7 KIM WILL TRAVEL TO JAPAN ON JANUARY 3 TO ATTEND MEETING OF EAST ASIAN AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS ON KOREA. (SEE REFTEL). UNDERHILL

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